

Letter to General Sir Charles Asgill, 2nd Baronet, GCH (6 April 1762 – 23 July 1823)

Dear great-great-great Grandpa, Charles

This day, 203 years ago, you passed away in Chelsea, London, with Mary Ann by your side. I remember you especially on this day. You were racked by an illness that caused your death. You were plagued by a Swindler claiming to be your nephew, who was dispatching his invoices to your accountant for payment, while you lay dying. You had not been reimbursed by the government for the money due to you for equipping the 11th Regiment of Foot out of your own pocket years earlier - although you learned that it had been paid, but only on your deathbed. You had sold your home at 6 York Street, St. James's two years earlier, presumably to balance the books. Your beloved wife, Sophia Ogle, had predeceased you by four years. Perhaps you were ready to join her in the vault at St. James's Church, Piccadilly?

We never met, of course, but I have lived in your company for a quarter of a century, and I know you well. It has been a privilege to have learned about so much of your life. On the whole, it was a good life, but you were foolish in your youth – your hard-working and well-respected father left you a fortune, but you squandered it away on gambling. Your sisters never forgave you for that. You paid the price later in your life, after your retirement, when you and Sophia had to watch the pennies so that the pounds looked after themselves.

I have not found you in every corner of your life. The facts are simply not there to be found. But I have pieced most of it together over time. There's still lots which I wish I knew more about. Tantalising snippets were found, but I could never flesh these out. Perhaps you will be able to tell me one day?! I wonder what you said to George Washington when the two of you met up on the other side? Did he apologise to you? Did you forgive him? Was he still sore about not being sent a thank-you letter?

So many times I felt you were watching over me – nudging me to look here or look there. I found things beyond my wildest dreams and always felt that you had somehow steered me in the right direction. I hope you know that your biography was published three years ago. This year, that biography was reviewed in the "Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research", the most prestigious publication of its kind. I am thrilled that it has brought your story closer to those who will be interested. Along with that achievement, my interview with Helen Tovey is now on YouTube where that, too, is gathering interest. Not quite so quickly or dramatically as my daughter's wood mouse video, but then you are a niche market!

This year, too, a biochemist has taken an interest in your story. He has managed to weave our DNA together, although nothing is ever certain beyond doubt.

I take leave of you for now, and send you my respect and good wishes. Rest in Peace. The truth has finally come out into the open after 233 years of being silenced.

With love from your descendant, and my respects to your parents.

Anne
23 July 2026